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Johnson City isn't a good location for methadone clinic

Published March 8, 2013



We are adamantly opposed to efforts to locate a methadone clinic in Johnson City. It was a bad idea 10 years ago, and it's still a bad idea today

A decade ago, a company was granted a certificate of need to locate a methadone clinic at 4 Wesley Court. The state later revoked that permit after hearing complaints from local residents. Now, another company is asking the state to grant it a certificate of need so that it may proceed with establishing a methadone clinic.

It's only reasonable that city officials, business owners and local residents would want to protect their neighborhoods from problems that might be associated with opiate abuse treatment centers. That's why methadone clinics have been unwelcome in the city for several years now.

We understand that those struggling to break free of the chains of addiction should be given a chance to do so, but a methadone clinic in Johnson City is not the place to do it.

If you feel the same way, write to state officials and ask that they hold a public hearing on this matter. Those requests should be mailed to:

Health Services and Development Agency

The Frost Building Third Floor

161 Rosa L. Parks Blvd.

Nashville, TN 37243

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Johnson City methadone clinic opposition grows

Updated March 17, 2013 10:31 AM
By **Rex Barber** - Assistant News Editor



A resolution opposing starting a methadone clinic in Johnson City could be presented at the March meeting of the Washington County Commission.

Steve Kester, co-owner of Tri-Cities Holding LLC, a company started to locate a methadone clinic at 4 Wesley Court, said a clinic could be in place by year's end should the Tennessee Health and Development Agency grant a certificate of need.

Tri-Cities Holding's application for the certificate of need is in the review process right now. It will be late June at the earliest before a hearing on the certificate can be held.

The public safety committee of the county commission met Tuesday night and discussed the proposed clinic. The five commissioners on the committee unanimously approved a resolution opposing the clinic.

Roger Nave, committee chairman, put the clinic on the agenda because he had heard from many people who opposed the clinic in the Gray and Sulphur Springs communities but also from inside Johnson City.

"I listened to the people that had a concern on this and there was no one that was in favor of it," he said. "And I did what the wishes of the people (were), what they wanted."

Nave said County Attorney John Rambo is working on the resolution's final wording. Nave is also requesting that state Sen. Rusty Crowe and state Reps. Matthew Hill and Micah Van Huss work in Nashville to oppose the certificate of need. This resolution approved Tuesday should be presented to the full commission for consideration March 25.

Nave thought methadone was not the best option for treatment and rehabilitation of people with drug dependency.

"We have top-class medical facilities in this area to deal with any problem that our citizens have," Nave said. "The addicts do need help and support, but methadone is not the answer to their problems."

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The five commissioners on the public safety committee are Mike Ford, Sam Humphreys, Sam Phillips, Pete Speropolus and Nave.

The certificate of need for this methadone clinic must go through a review process from several government agencies before approval can be granted.

Mark Farber, deputy director of the Tennessee Health Services and Development Agency, said the application has been filed and is currently under review for completeness.

If the application is deemed to be complete by month's end, it will be submitted to the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services for a 60-day review.

After that agency's report on the application, a hearing will be scheduled to determine if the certificate of need is approved or denied. The earliest this hearing could be held, provided the application is found to be complete by the end of March, is late June, Farber said.

In the 60-day review, the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services verifies the information in the application is correct. Documentation and sources of data provided in the application are checked. Analyses for the impact and financial consequences from the proposed project are also done. Additionally, the project is checked to make sure it fits with the state health plan and to determine if any other work needs done.

The Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services maintains an online database of all the various clinics it licenses. In all, licenses for 22 different kinds of clinics can be searched. The licenses are mainly for drug and alcohol services or mental health services.

A search for "alcohol and drug non-residential opiate treatment" licenses in the state returned 12 sites. None of them are located in Northeast Tennessee. Two are in Knoxville and one is in Chattanooga.

This agency has a record of 1,356 licenses for mental health and substance abuse facilities in Tennessee. In Washington County, there is a total of 31 licenses, mainly for mental health or personal support services, though some licenses have been approved for drug and alcohol rehabilitation services.

This list was current as of Wednesday.

Part of the review process involves community input to the Tennessee Health and Development Agency. This agency received six letters, all in opposition, regarding the clinic as of Friday afternoon. A public hearing had also been requested. A date for that hearing was not provided.

Another methadone clinic was proposed for Johnson City back in 2002. A certificate of need was originally granted but revoked in 2003 because of an issue with who was on the board that approved the original certificate.

This technicality may have resulted in the decision to overturn the certificate back in 2003, but a local coalition also formed in Johnson City in opposition of the clinic. This coalition included the city of Johnson City and Frontier Health, among other local entities.

Randy Jessee, senior vice president of specialty services at Frontier Health, said his organization has a stance on treatment based on what is considered to be best for the patient.

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Johnson City does not need methadone clinic

June 27th, 2013 11:32 am by SUSAN BARRY

Eleven years ago, Doug Varney (then the CEO of Frontier Health and who is now the commissioner of the state Department of Mental Health) and I talked to city commissioners about keeping drugs and the people who push them out of Johnson City. Varney presented the facts and statistics about methadone and the damage it does to people and cities.

I told commissioners about the death of my young daughter, Bridgette, and how her loss has devastated my family. Commissioners voted unanimously that right to keep more methadone clinics from Johnson City. A large number of citizens were at City Hall to agree strongly with this move.

Methadone was already here and it is still here, but we don't have to sanction it. Methadone has done irreparable damage to families in this state and in this country. Clinics are always developing new tactics to get us into their spider webs.

Recently, a clinic operator sued Johnson City alleging the city is violating the Americans with Disabilities Act for trying to block his application for a methadone clinic here. Let me say that the truest disability is being dead like my daughter.

That lawsuit was dismissed in federal court without prejudice. Had the case been dismissed with prejudice, we would be in a slightly better position at this junction.

Johnson City officials will be in Nashville today to address the Tennessee Health Services and Development Agency, which is considering a certificate of need for a methadone clinic in Johnson City. I hope citizens have let state officials know our feelings on this issue. The lives of our loved ones, family members and friends are at stake in this matter. As a doctor of mine once said: "We don't need methadone in Johnson City. Period."

Susan Barry lives in Johnson City. She believes her daughter, Bridgette A. Boudie, died in 2002 as a result of a methadone overdose.

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Michael Coats

If you think you kid died from Methadone overdose, then where did it come from? A family member leave it out? Charge them with Negligent Homicide. It is stupid to deny help to people who want it, because your family is incompetent in storing medicines away from children.

newcreation4@gmail.com

I know the lady who wrote this article, and her daughter was a grown young woman, not a child.

She saw firsthand the damage methadone did to her daughter. There are plenty of less toxic, more effective ways to overcome drug addiction. Methadone is a dangerous drug, which is more addictive and stronger than many of the drugs it allegedly "cures" people from being addicted to. Get the facts before you make ignorant comments.

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